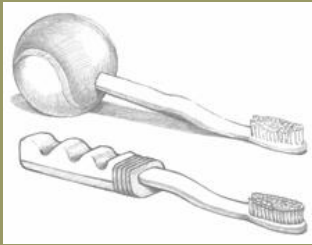


# Dental Care For People With Disabilities



**Broken teeth from a fall**



**Adapted toothbrushes to make them easier to hold**



**Electric toothbrush**



**Floss holders**

Currently, over 20 percent of the U.S. population has a disability. These disabilities can be present at birth and last throughout life or they can develop later in life. Disabilities can range from mild to severe and may affect the mind or the body or both. People with disabilities usually have more dental problems than those who don't have a disability. Some people with disabilities need no help with brushing or flossing. Others may need just a little help. Some may depend completely on others to provide their dental care. It is very important to look at the person's specific needs to help find what works best for their dental care.

## **What are some dental concerns for those with disabilities?**

- Cavities – seen often in those who have problems brushing and flossing
- Gum disease – seen often in those who have problems brushing and flossing
- Harmful oral habits – grinding teeth, pushing on teeth with tongue
- Trauma to the mouth or teeth – damage from falls or seizures
- Side effects of medications – some dry the mouth or cause gum tissue to over grow

## **What can be done to help those with disabilities with dental care?**

- Use toothpaste that has fluoride in it
- Have dental sealants placed by a dentist
- Ask about the side effects of medicines that you are taking
- If possible, switch to medicines that have fewer oral side effects
- Swish with water after taking liquid medicines containing sugar
- Drink a lot of water each day
- Eat a well-balanced diet, limit sugary sweets and snacks
- Adapt toothbrushes to make them easier to hold
- Use electric toothbrushes, flossers and floss handles
- Some patients cannot brush and floss by themselves. Teach their caregivers ways to improve the oral health of their clients.